

Live Your Dreams: Take a Ride on Britain's Heritage Railways

A new steam locomotive is to awe passengers in the UK. The construction work of the most powerful steam engine in Britain has been started in Scunthorpe. The creator of the design of the locomotive is Sir Nigel Gresley, the flying Scotsman, who conceived it already in the 1930s. The profiling of the No. 2007 Prince of Wales locomotive's steel frames will be carried out at the Tata Steel plant located in Lincolnshire, marking the first important stage in the manufacture of the locomotive that weighs 170 tons.

The funding for the project comes from private donors. As many as 600 people have committed to support it by donating £10 per month. Further, the Prince of Wales, and the railway enthusiast and Top Gear presenter James May have also agreed to back the scheme. As of now, the funding available is £350,000, but estimated project cost is £5 million.

The new heritage train with the steam locomotive is expected to roll out in 7 years. Until the new locomotive sets on its first journey tourists can choose from nearly 150 heritage or preservation lines that ride across the UK today. As is the case with the new locomotive, most of the heritage lines in the UK are being financially supported by local volunteers who do not want heritage to slip away.

Regular services are run by heritage railways till early autumn starting from the spring season. However, services are reduced and only specials are run during the winter months. Steam and petrol (gasoline) or diesel locomotives are used for running these trains. Therefore, if you want an authentic heritage steam engine driven train travel experience, you should check the timetables before travelling. Here is an overview of the most popular heritage railways in the UK:



Bluebell Railways

The most famous British heritage line runs for about 11 miles from Sheffield Park to East Grinstead across Sussex. This is the first standard-gauge railway to resume passenger service, in 1960, three years after the line was closed by British Rail. The Bluebell Railways regularly appears in films as well as television series. It offers themed as well as dining events, and excursions to attractions such as the Folk Museum, 400-year-old Sackville College and Chailey Windmill.

Island Line

The Isle of Man Railway is a 15.3-mile long narrow gauge heritage line that runs from Port Erin at the southernmost tip of the island to Douglas, the capital. This line still uses five original steam locomotives that were built during the period 1874 to 1926 and thirty liveried coaches. It operates between the months of February and November. The attractions located close to its stations include Castletown's ancient capital, Rushen Abbey, and Port Erin Railway Museum.

Talylyn Railway

The Talylyn Railway, operating from Tywyn to Nant Gwernol, Wales, was the first narrow-gauge railway to be licensed by Parliament. This is also the UK's oldest heritage railway. A public committee saved the railway when it was decided to close it down in 1951. The service continues to use seven steam locomotives. Two of them have now been used for nearly 150 years. The line operates from Easter season to October. Tourist attractions include the Narrow-Gauge Railway Museum and Dolgoch Falls.

Severn Valley Railways

The Severn Valley Railways' 16-mile route tracks the River Severn's course through Shropshire and Worcestershire. Though the standard-gauge line was closed in the 1960s, it was restored by enthusiasts and a part of the line was reopened in 1970. It attracts more than 250,000 passengers annually. Steam locomotives built during the first half of the nineteenth century are still being used. The line offers stunning views, dinner evenings and driving courses.



West Somerset Railway

Originally, the West Somerset Railway service was between Taunton and Watchet. The line was closed 1971. Five years later it was reopened and today it is the longest standard gauge heritage railway line in the UK (22.75 miles). The line operates eight steam locomotives. Regular services are from March to October. Winter specials are also operated. Nearby attractions include the medieval village, castle at Dunster, Cleeve Abbey monastery, etc.

Strathspey Railway

This is a 10-mile standard gauge line running from Aviemore to Broomhill. Run by volunteers from 1978 after it was closed in 1965, it currently operates three steam locomotives. Many original features of the

line have been retained.

North Yorkshire Moors Railway

The original line was opened in 1836 by George Stephenson. It was reinstated in 1973. The 18-mile line operates between Pickering and Whitby. This line is considered to be the busiest heritage line in the world.

One out of the six steam engines used is the A4 Class Sir Nigel Gresley. Trains are run on a daily basis from April through October. The number of services is reduced during winter time. In addition to the stunning views, tourist attractions along the route include the Pickering Castle and Whitby seaside delights.



Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway

Known as a little railway (Laal Ratty), the line runs from Ravenglass, a coastal town to Dalegarth near Boot village. In 1960, the original line was closed. Local businessmen who purchased the line are running it as a tourist attraction. The line has four steam locomotives and regular services are operated from March to October. Some of the tourist attractions along the route are the Roman Bath House, Hardknott fort and Muncaster Castle.

Date: 2015-10-01

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-uk-invites-passengers-to-enjoy-150-heritage-railways-article2622>